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# THE IRISH NATIONALIST AS PRO-ALLY

BY SHANE LESLIE

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THE final Irish attitude to the War is one that cannot be decided by reasons of politics in the United States or of executions in Ireland. That attitude is far-reaching and involves not only the historical relations of the Celtic race to the Teutonic, but the future relations of Ireland to her neighbors, England and France, and eventually, perhaps, the prospect of an alliance between the United States and England. In this light the Celtic question ceases to be merely an antiquarian one.

During the past twenty years an immense amount of research and energy has been thrown into Celtic studies in Great Britain. Of these the Welsh Eistedfod, the Gaelic League and even the Sinn Fein may be considered manifestations. From Germany good scholarship has been directed externally, but the only countries vitally and internally interested are in the Allied group. The sea-divided Celt has his home in Brittany, Cornwall, Wales, Cumberland, the Hebrides and parts of Scotland and Ireland. This is the so-called Celtic fringe, but out of this fringe blood and genius, soul and strength have passed into the stolid Anglo-Saxons and materialistic Franks by intermarriage. There is also a Celtic stratum, difficult to estimate, underlying all Gallic France, which no doubt cemented her eighteenth century entente with Ireland. The British Empire itself would be more scientifically called an Anglo-Celtic one.

In Germany the Celt was obliterated centuries ago, and in Austria is only to be found among exiled families of Irish descent.

To-day the Celt finds himself at war with Germany as a matter of sheer fact, political and geographical. It is im-

portant to know also whether he is at war with Germany in principle and ideal.

The Irish problem lies largely in the instinctive jarring between a semi-Celtic and a semi-Saxon people. Hence the paradox that the recent rising in Dublin was in one sense more an anti-Teutonic than a pro-German one. The Englishman is a mixture of Celt and Teuton, and has shown traces of the latter in his past dealings with subjects in America as well as in Ireland. To-day the Nietzschean decries him as a degenerate German, a "poor cousin" culturally. The Irish look upon the German as the primitive type of Saxon before he was redeemed by mixture with the Celt.

Let us consider the attitude of the Celt towards the world crisis. His whole strength has been thrown against the Central Powers, whether it comes from Breton sailors, Welsh Fusiliers, Connaught Rangers, Scotch Highlanders, or Cumberland (Cymryland) dalesmen. It is doubtful if a single native speaker of any Celtic dialect is fighting for the Teutonic side, the Irish prisoners having resolutely refused to change their allegiance.

As to principle, if we trace the history of the Celt we are confronted with certain unvarying symptoms.

In the first place, suspicion and hatred towards any system of world domination. This was so in Roman days, and Ireland actually succeeded in staying outside the Caesarian pale. It is only since conciliation days that Ireland has acquiesced in the British combine, and after a struggle of five hundred years to keep out. The failure in imaginative statesmanship at the outbreak of the war to give Ireland autonomy means that a vital problem which might have been settled waits, and unfortunately waits with a vengeance.

Secondly, there is a deep religious feeling, dating from Druidism, which rises against intrusion in affairs of the other world. The Scotch Free Churchman, the Welsh Calvinist, and the Irish Catholic have all declined to accept the State Creed of England. This is the Celtic instinct to refuse anything in the realm of ideas from the State. There is nothing more repulsive to the Celtic soul than the inoculation of German youth by State professors with a cut-and-dried political creed and propaganda regardless of truth and the rights of other peoples. "Live and let live" has

always been the Celt's line of action or rather non-action. This will account for the extraordinary small amount of European soil left in the hands of the Celts. The Teutonic view has always been that the human being was made for the State, whereas the Celtic view, as it has developed in French and Irish politics, is that the State was made for man.

Thirdly, the Celt has been in perpetual revolt against the logic of fact, the power of militarism, and the ostentation of wealth. The Irish are justly called the "fighting race," but they are not militarists. They have been of the nature of crusaders rather than conquerors. Economically they have been given up by Anglo-Saxons, who have endeavored to teach them the ways of State-regulated orderliness and text-book methods of acquiring wealth.

In the past the Irish have resisted all attempts to impose a typically English culture upon them, just as they would resist to the death any culture that was handed them on the tip of a German bayonet. It has been the same in Wales and in Brittany. It must be admitted that England has given Ireland more chances of realizing her own life and literature than German legislation permits in Poland, which makes a fair analogue with Ireland. On three questions England compares favorably with Germany. They are the questions of religion, land and language. Shortly after England had disestablished her own State church in Ireland, we find Prussia jailing the patriot Polish Cardinal Ledochowski. In more recent times while England has advanced money to enable the Irish peasant to possess Irish land, we find Prussia advancing money for the exact purpose of expatriating the natives of German Poland. At a time that Prussia was penalizing the use of the Polish tongue, England was permitting grants for the revival of Irish. It is just to England to acknowledge this, as it is just to Ireland to admit that these benefits were only won by gigantic agitations. Germany has been guilty today of the worst side of the Tudor system as it once was in Ireland.

The policy of a national hate is about the only common link to be found between the German and Irish peoples. Even so, the Irish hate of England is a relic of religious persecution nobly borne in the past. But the Prussian variety is a State manufacture, offensive not defensive, and far from having a religious basis, for the Prussian seldom

seems to have had a religion to persecute. Pagan until within sight of the Reformation he became gradually rationalist afterwards.

While recent blundering in Ireland has brought out some of that Celtic dislike of England which the wisest Irish statesmanship had agreed to bury in the past, any Irish-German entente must be regarded as treasonable to small nationalities and unnatural to Celticism. The Irish policy must be decided in Ireland, not America, and by those who keep hearth and holding on the old sod. Even a British envoy like Sir Cecil Spring Rice, who retains hope and home in Ireland, is a better Nationalist from Ireland's point of view than a preacher of "green anarchy" in Chicago. At the outbreak of war Ireland declared herself with the Allies. Only a small, passionate and courageous minority dared to hope for Irish freedom as the paradoxical result of a German victory. This was even more widely held in America, before it was seen that Germany could not help even her declared Allies, much less a distant and mercurial quantity like Ireland. The text of German promises to the Sinn Fein were probably never placed on paper but remained illusionary and unrealizable to the last. But men were drawn by these promises to political action in America and to their lonely death in Ireland.

The result among the Irish has been two-fold. The anti-British outburst, on which Germany seems to have calculated, has taken place, followed on second thoughts by a rather grim suspicion that Germany has not played fair. Germany not unnaturally was pro-German throughout and not pro-Irish, while Casement, who tried to negotiate some agreement between the two peoples, was pro-Irish and not pro-German. Previously in his hectic career Casement had met German methods in Africa and loathed them as he loathed all tyranny. The Germans sought only to use his Quixotism, and allowed him to issue an Imperial promise that in case of invasion Irish Church property would be respected. It was as safe as promising the safety of public buildings in Nova Zembla. What would be interesting to know would be the exact promise made to the Sinn Feiners, who were deluded into believing that after a week a German army would arrive. The Sinn Feiners gave everything and the Germans risked nothing except a tubload of old Russian rifles. The *Deutschland* which might have ren-

dered real succor was too good to be wasted on "mere Irish." Casement was literally marooned. Friends in America, knowing his qualities and that he was sick at the time, wished that he should be kept in Germany as the Irish envoy till the end of the war. But he was of more service to Germany dead than sick. He was forced on a hopeless errand and there is some reason to believe that he tried to prevent the rising, but was not allowed by his captors to communicate with the Irish leaders. The rest is history. It was not for the Defense of the Realm but to make a Berlin holiday that a dozen dreamers and poets were executed. What Germany planned England completed. There is little wonder that in view of the German betrayal of Casement, John Quinn of New York should write, "How then can any man with a drop of Irish blood in his veins ever again hope for the victory of those betrayers"? There has certainly been a sufficiency of cold water to dash the hot blood in the German-Irish entente, which can only linger now as local politics may obscurely demand. Whatsoever a Teutonic or Anglo-Saxon government sow that shall they reap. The English Government unfortunately allowed dragons' teeth to be sown in Ireland before the war, which sprang up later in armed Sinn Feiners. The German Government gave promises of support as illusionary as the English promise of Home Rule. No Irishman doubts that each Irish execution has been in sweet accord with the disposition of the German General Staff.

The Germans can never reach Ireland except over a defeated fleetless England, but if they did obtain Ireland as a faldstool for the "Admiral of the Atlantic," who can doubt that their treatment of the people would be similar to that meted to the Poles? It is doubtful if the German official mind would recognize the Gaelic speaking, happy-go-lucky, idealistic Celt as a "*Culturvolk*."

Redmond's position has been excruciatingly difficult. At the outbreak of war he might have declared neutrality as the right of a small nation, but this would have left Ireland in a state of civil strife during the period of the war with the prospect of gaining nothing from the victorious Allies after the war. When Redmond forgot the past and took his stand by the Allies, it was the psychological moment to make him Irish Premier in Dublin. Under a Dublin Parliament the rising would never have taken place. Redmond

insisted on Ireland's levies being voluntary and not conscriptory. It is his influence and not the menace of the Sinn Féin, as their admirers claim, that keeps conscription out of Ireland.

To look to the future reckoning which doubtless awaits all nations great and small, Redmond can point to the overwhelming thousands who have joined the Allies from Ireland. Ireland cannot afford to be on both sides of a world conflict, especially as she has not yet realized the promissory note due to her for services in the field. That the conscience and consensus of the empire will one day insist on that promise being redeemed there can be no doubt. Meantime, while it is kept dangling, distrust and disunity, pleasing to Germany alone, can only result. Whatever has happened, no Irishman can wish to see Germany victorious over France. Ireland herself can never accept her liberty over the dead body of Belgium, nor become a republic as the French Republic ceases.

The war is one where greater than material stake is at issue. No mere terrestrial gain can be in the purpose of a struggle so gigantic. It is at base not a war for any empire or even wholly on behalf of small nationalities, desirable as it is that Poland, Belgium and Ireland should emerge in a state of protected autonomy at the close, but a war of Idea. A certain idea not unknown before threatens. Another idea dearer to mankind is at stake. It may end in a compromise, but for the moment it is a question whether military Imperialism shall rule the world. The Irish Celt detested England's attempt to destroy the Boer Republics, but he cannot detract from England's entry into the great war. In Celtic eyes England seems to have blundered on to the right side. Though his vision may be obscured by England's lack of sympathy and knowledge in dealing with the Irish Question, opposition to the German Ideal remains instinctive with him. When all has been said, the Irish Nationalist must abide his hour, confident in the justice which the principles underlying the Allied cause must bring him. For the Irish Celt to become a pro-German for reasons more fundamental than the mere political involves a change of soul so radical as to amount to de-Celticisation.

SHANE LESLIE.